

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 EA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 HA-05 IO-13 /114 W

-----047702 152025Z /15

R 132133Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5350

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

USINT HAVANA

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 08050

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: SHUM, EG, SP

SUBJECT: SPANISH PRIEST ON SITUATION IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA

REF: YAOUNDE 3254

1. EMBASSY WAS VISITED JULY 14 BY ONE OF THE SPANISH PRIESTS EXPELLED FROM EG (REFTEL AND PREVIOUS), WHO EXPLAINED HE HAD SPOKEN WITH A US OFFICIAL IN DOUALA BUT WAS SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD BY THE INTERPRETER THAT HE HAD RELAYED IN TRANSLATION ONLY WHAT HE CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE. AWARE OF USG INTEREST AND FEARFUL THAT ERRONEOUS IMPRESSIONS MIGHT HAVE BEEN LEFT, SAID THE PRIEST, HE DECIDED TO VISIT THE EMBASSY.

2. IN GENERAL, HIS PICTURE WAS ONE OF MISERY AND TERROR: ALMOST NO FOOD BEYOND WHAT GREW WILD, LOW PAY FOR THOSE WITH JOBS, NO PAY AT ALL FOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES IN THE LAST FIVE MONTHS, AND PERVASIVE TERROR SOWN BY CONTINUING ARBITRARY ARRESTS, FINES, BEATINGS, AND MURDERS. PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT WAS THE SITUATION
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ON ANNOBON ISLAND, WHICH HAD BEEN STRIPPED OF ITS ABLE-BODIED MEN AND WAS LAST VISITED BY A SUPPLY SHIP SOME 18 MONTHS AGO. MAIL WAS NOT DELIVERED IN EG, AND NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES WERE BANNED, MEANING LOCAL NEWS WAS ONLY BY WORD OF MOUTH AND OTHER NEWS LIMITED TO WHAT COULD BE PICKED UP ON INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTS. (VOA WAS HEARD QUITE WELL AT 1 PM, HE

SAID.)

3. THE PRINCIPAL POLITICAL FIGURES BEYOND MASIE HIMSELF WERE THE VICE PRESIDENT, THE INTERIOR MINISTER, THE DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR SECURITY, AND THE ARMED FORCES COMMANDER. ALL FOUR WERE OF THE SAME STRIPE AS MASIE, SAID THE PRIEST, ALTHOUGH THE ARMED FORCES COMMANDER, WHO HAD RECEIVED MILITARY TRAINING IN SPAIN, HAD-- UNLIKE ALL OTHER HIGH GOVERNMENT FIGURES-- PROVED ACCESSIBLE, AT LEAST TO THE SPANISH PRIESTS. THE REST OF THE CABINET FOUND IT VERY HARD TO SEE MASIE, AND WHEN FINALLY GRANTED AN AUDIENCE WOULD BE PHYSICALLY SEARCHED JUST BEFOREHAND.

4. MASIE WAS OBVIOUSLY BEING PROPPED UP BY SOME FOREIGN POWER, SAID THE PRIEST, AND HE THOUGHT IT WAS PROBABLY MAINLY THE SOVIETS. THEY WERE IN CHARGE OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE ON THE ISLAND (FORMERLY FERNANDO POO), AND HAD A BASE IN THE PORT FORMERLY CALLED SAN CARLOS. AS MANY AS 15 RUSSIAN VESSELS WERE OFTEN THERE, HE SAID, AND WHILE THEY LOOKED LIKE FISHING BOATS, THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE SUSPICION ABOUT THEIR TRUE NATURE. AEROFLOT'S THREE WEEKLY FLIGHTS TO THE ISLAND EACH BROUGHT IN 100 PEOPLE AND TOOK OUT ANOTHER 100, AND WHILE THIS MAY HAVE BEEN MERELY CREW ROTATION FOR THE FISHING FLEET, THE PRIEST CONTINUED, HE HAD BEEN TOLD CONFIDENTIAL

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BY THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR THAT THERE WAS SUSPICION ABOUT THAT AS WELL.

.5. IN A CHANGE FROM THEIR ORIGINAL PRACTICE, SAID THE PRIEST, THE SOVIETS RESIDENT ON THE ISLAND HAD BEGUN TO HIRE LOCAL PEOPLE AS CHAUFFEURS, ETC. SOME OF THOSE HIRED HAD PREVIOUSLY STUDIED IN MOSCOW, UNDERSTOOD RUSSIAN, AND HAD REPORTED TO FRIENDS THAT AT LEAST SOME OF THE SOVIETS WERE AWARE OF, AND UNCOMFORTABLE ABOUT, THE NATURE OF THE MASIE REGIME.

6. THE CHINESE SEEMED TO HAVE VIRTUALLY A COUNSELOR ROLE WITH MASIE, ACCORDING TO THE PRIEST. WHEN MASIE HAD STILL BEEN ON THE ISLAND, FOUR OR FIVE CHINESE WENT INTO THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE EVERY MORNING AT THE OPENING OF BUSINESS. THE CHINESE WERE ALSO PROMINENT IN THE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FIELD, SINCE UNLIKE THE OTHER DOCTORS (ARABS AND CUBANS) THEY HAD

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MADRID 08050

MEDICINE TO DISPENSE. THE CUBANS WERE IN CHARGE OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE ON THE MAINLAND, SAID THE PRIEST, BUT HE HAD NO OTHER INFORMATION ON THEM SINCE HE HAD LIVED ON THE ISLAND.

7. THIS PRIEST, WHO PREFERRED NOT TO GIVE HIS NAME, WILL BE LEAVING MADRID IN A FEW DAYS, BUT HE SAID WE COULD CALL HIS ORDER (THE CLARETIAN, WHICH INCLUDES OTHER FORMER RESIDENTS OF EG) IF WE HAD ANY QUESTIONS. TODMAN

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